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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SR](#) [YI](#) [AU](#) [UNMIK](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO STATUS: SERBS AND KOSOVARS DRAW REDLINES ON
DECENTRALIZATION, STATUS ISSUESA

REF: A. VIENNA 870

[¶B.](#) HOVENIER E-MAIL TO EUR/SCE ON 3/23/06 - 1
[¶C.](#) HOVENIER E-MAIL TO EUR/SCE ON 3/23/06 - 2

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[¶1.](#) (U) The following is information gathered by the US liaison officer to the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Kosovo negotiations (UNOSEK) in Vienna.

SUMMARY

[¶2.](#) (SBU) In a March 17 meeting, top Serbian negotiators acknowledged to UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari that Kosovo's "separation from Serbia" is a possible outcome of negotiations, but made clear Belgrade would not be party to this and refused to discuss how to manage the process to ensure Belgrade's buy-in on non-status issues. They also urged Ahtisaari to launch direct talks on status by the summer. Kosovo Prime Minister Ceku pledged dramatic progress soon on standards implementation, but warned Ahtisaari that Pristina could not accept any Belgrade authority in Serb-majority areas, a separate Serb entity or "third-layer of government", or anything less than a Kosovo army. Aside from a pair of already-planned face-to-face talks on decentralization, municipal delimitation, and Mitrovica in early and mid-April, UNOSEK anticipates expert-level talks on minority rights and protections and on religious sites and cultural heritage issues in April. End Summary.

AHTISAARI MEETING WITH LEADING SERBIAN NEGOTIATORS

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Following the second round of talks on decentralization in Vienna on March 17 (ref A), UN Special Envoy for Kosovo final status talks Martti Ahtisaari and his deputy Albert Rohan held a dinner with Serbian delegation heads Slobodan Samardzic and Leon Kojen. Samardzic and Kojen reluctantly acknowledged that Kosovo's "separation from Serbia" is a possible outcome of the status process, but made clear that their bosses, Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica and Serbian President Tadic, would not be party to such an outcome under any circumstances. They declined to engage in any discussions about how to manage the process to ensure Belgrade's buy-in to key issues even if Serbian leaders refused to agree to Kosovo's independence. They stressed that Belgrade expected Ahtisaari to lead "formal talks on Kosovo's status" between the parties in the near future, implying a desire to launch this process by the summer. (Note: Ahtisaari later expressed private disappointment that Belgrade's display of greater realism about the outcome of the final status process following the delivery of firm private messages by Contact Group countries has had little operational effect thus far. End note.) Samardzic and Kojen also expressed concern about the recent "militarization" of Kosovo's leadership, a reference to the election of new Kosovo Prime Minister Ceku and former Prime Minister Haradinaj's formal reentry into Kosovar politics.

AHTISAARI MEETING WITH KOSOVO PM CEKU

[¶4.](#) (SBU) Ceku stopped in Vienna enroute to Brussels for a March 20 dinner with Ahtisaari. Ahtisaari emphasized to Ceku that UNMIK will soon prepare another of its periodic reports on standards implementation, and Kosovo cannot afford a report that reflects anything less than dramatic progress on standards. Ceku made clear he is committed to ensuring such progress and complete cooperation between Pristina and UNOSEK.

[¶5.](#) (SBU) Ceku laid out three main Kosovar redlines on decentralization: (1) no authority from Belgrade in Serb-majority areas; (2) no separate Serb entity in Kosovo; and (3) no third-layer of government. Ceku, former commander of the Kosovo Protection Corps, also expressed a strongly-held view that a post-status Kosovo must have an army. Citing proposals to limit Kosovo's security force to

some type of gendarmerie, Ceku said that the Kosovo Albanian public and Serbia would view such a force as "little more than a police force," and argued that such a force could not guarantee Kosovo's security. He also stressed that an independent Kosovo would want to participate in global peace support operations, which necessitated an army.

OTHER AHTISAARI MEETINGS

16. (SBU) In a March 18 meeting in Vienna, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Tarasyuk told Ahtisaari that Kiev is very concerned that Kosovo could set a precedent that supports separatist tendencies in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdnistria, South Ossetia, or Abkhazia. Ahtisaari responded that his mandate is limited to Kosovo and that Kosovo should be seen as a unique case. Ahtisaari is scheduled to be part of the official Finnish delegation to the funeral of former Estonian President Lennart Meri on March 26 and then address a special session of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on March 28.

UPDATE ON VARIOUS NEGOTIATING TRACKS

17. (SBU) As noted ref A, UNOSEK will submit to the Serbian and Kosovar negotiating teams during the week of March 27 a paper of decentralization principles highlighting areas of agreement and UNOSEK's proposed next steps in addressing key areas of disagreement. This paper and the parties' responses will pave the way for the third round of face-to-face talks in Vienna on April 3 and a mid-April meeting to discuss municipal delimitation and Mitrovica. Deputy Special Envoy Rohan will travel to Pristina March 28-30 for preparatory discussions with the Kosovars. Meanwhile, the Greek NGO ELIAMEP has provided UNOSEK a revised concept paper of the possible implementation in Kosovo of the Mount Athos model (ref B), but Pristina has yet to provide an updated position paper on the religious sites/cultural heritage issue promised by March 17. UNOSEK staffers visited Pristina and Belgrade the week of 20 March to consult on next steps, with an eye to face-to-face talks by the end of April.

18. (SBU) UNOSEK - in consultation with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Council of Europe, and the USG)- has sent Pristina guidance on areas where it seeks further elaboration of Pristina's response to its questionnaire on minority rights and protection issues (ref C). Kosovar authorities have organized a retreat on minority issues for March 25-26 with the participation of all of Kosovo's minority communities, including Kosovo Serbs, and members of Kosovo's Political Group will participate in a seminar in Oxford to help them prepare detailed position papers on these issues. UNOSEK is working on a proposed agenda that both sides agree can be discussed in expert-level talks in April. Meanwhile, the U.S. liaison officer to UNOSEK and team leader on the minority rights and protections met with UNHCR officials in Geneva on March 20, and UNHCR has pledged to provide UNOSEK with a list of key returns issues that will likely form the basis for discussions between the parties on returns-related principles.

McCaw